

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

An Appeal from the King

The King of the Belgians in Havre to President Wilson, October 18, 1917

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. WOODROW WILSON:

During more than three years the American Commission for Relief under Mr. Hoover's able leadership has achieved with marked success and under the most trying circumstances the task of supplying the Belgian nation with the bare necessities of life. Moreover, Your Excellency's Government has lately assumed the burden of financing the Commission.

Those unmistakable marks of sympathy make me feel confident that whatever the difficulties may be, the United States will never allow their noble work to be jeopardized. However, since several months the imports of foodstuffs have been inadequate and the last reports which reach me from the invaded territory are such that I consider it my duty to make a personal appeal to your intervention. The Belgian population is confronted not only with hardship and suffering but with actual famine, the

death rate is steadily increasing. Infantile mortality is appalling. Tuberculosis is spreading and threatening the future of the race. Only by immediate and energetic action can the lives of many of my unhappy people be saved during the impending winter. My Government has put all available ships at the disposal of the Commission and is unable to provide for more. For the additional transports as well as for cargoes and financial means, Belgium must rely entirely upon the United States. I do not doubt but Your Excellency will give to Mr. Hoover full power to meet the present emergency with adequate measures, and in such conditions we are confident that Mr. Hoover will assure the success of the great task he has nobly assumed in the name of the American nation.

ALBERT

Source

United States Department of State, Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, 1914, Supplement 2, The World War, pp. 460-461